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**Sent:** Sunday, March 05, 2006 2:30 PM  
**To:** MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov  
**Cc:** yscuba@californiadivers.com; Marc Shargel; John R. Wolfe  
**Subject:** MLPAComments: Comments on the MLPA proposals

My name is Joel Zdepski, a scuba diver with underwater photography as a hobby. I live at 470 Levin Ave, Mountain View CA.

I have been reviewing the information on <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/mlpa/draftdocuments.html>. In particular, I have read all of the "stakeholder" recommendations as well as the recommendation generated by Staff. I am concentrating on the Staff recommendations in this e-mail, as it is the newest proposal. I feel the Staff recommendation is insufficient on several levels. My opinions are based on my own observations while on scuba and some e-mail exchanges that I have had with a few experts in the field of Rockfish, most notably Dr. Milton Love of UCSB and Tom Laidig of NMFS. Each has expressed to me that the size, spacing and location of protected habitat is crucial, as rockfish larvae are at the mercy of sea current. The present MPLA process will set a precedent, intentional or not, for future conservation on the rest of the California coast. I think it will be ill-advised to set-aside areas approaching the minimum recommended area. I am counting on this process to set aside habitat which is clearly sufficient for the conservation goals of the program. Economic and social interests must take a secondary position to habitat preservation until we Californians can make a meaningful assessment of the sufficiency of the MPLA model. In total I feel that "Package 2" is superior.

I would like to mention a few specifics where I think the Staff recommendation falls short. In the Carmel bay region, I prefer the design of Package 2 in two major areas. I think its recommended Point Lobos SCMA is greatly superior as it connects the Point Lobos SMR to the deep canyon that lies just North West of the Mono Lobo Wall area. In addition to its ecological importance, it is an important recreational area for beach and kayak divers as well as the commercial Scuba boats, especially in the winter months. I also feel that the commercial dive operations are adversely affected by the reduced size the Staff recommends (as compared to Package 2) for the Carmel Pinnacles region. My sense is that Staff recommends SMR status only for the densest kelp beds, while Package 2 is more protective of the other adjacent areas of underwater relief and habitat that is commonly called the Outer Pinnacles. This region is easily the most important dive destination for both the commercial dive operations as well as private boats. Finally, as a beach diver, I am also disappointed by the very significant reduction in SCMA classified habitat in the Monterey/Pacific Grove areas in the Staff recommendation. This stretch of beach accessible diving is notable for both the number of Scuba Divers and the scarcity of large rockfish. It appears to me that the economic interests of the Monterey area and the conservation interests are aligned. Divers are their spending on rooms, food and scuba paraphernalia are an important component of the local economy. It

has long been a goal of many Monterey luminaries to create an "Ed Ricketts" marine preserve. Package 2 is far superior in this regard.

In conclusion, I continue to feel that Package 2 is the best plan before the MLPA Blue Ribbon Task Force. I am sure that Staff worked hard on their proposal, however for many reasons, I feel their proposal falls short of what needs to be done to protect our important near-shore resources. I strongly recommend that you select Package 2. I have cc'd the representatives of the Scuba Diver stakeholders and request that they promote Package 2 in all upcoming forums for public comment.

Regards,

Joel Zdepski